

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /057 W

----- 093843

R 191343Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2753

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USMISSION NATO

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 2167

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, RO

SUBJ: ROMANIAN PERCEPTION OF U.S. CATASTROPHE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

REF: BUCHAREST 2121 (NOTAL)

1. WE HAVE NOW HAD TIME TO CANVAS, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE HERE, A NUMBER OF GOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS, POLITICAINS, OPIONION MAKERS AND INTELLECTUALS ON THEIR REACTION TO THE COLLAPSE OF U.S.-BACKED REGIMES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND ON THE RESULTING "WORLD BALANCE OF FORCES."

2. WE HAVE BEEN STRUCK BY THE TACTFUL RELUCTANCE OF GOR OFFICIALS TO RAISE SE ASIA WITH US AT ALL. WE BELIEVE THE GOR IS RELIEVED THAT A MAJOR ISSUE ON WHICH WE DISAGREED (BUT SIDE STEPPED BILATERALLY) HAS BEEN RESOLVED AND ERASED FROM THE AGENDA. A FREQUENT LINE HAS BEEN THAT THE U.S., NOW RID OF THE SVN INCUBUS, CAN ENGAGE ITSELF MORE CONSTRUCTIVELY, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND SHOULD NOT TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT ITS STRATEGY AND TACTICS

TOWARD THE ENTIRE UNDERDEVELOPED WORLD. IF IT DOES SO, WITH ITS POWERFUL ECONOMY IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO ADJUST ITSELF (BY IMPLICATION, BETTER THAN THE SOVIETS) TO THE EMERGING "NEW WORLD ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORDER". THE U.S. SHOULD BE BETTER OFF AS A RESULT OF ENDING THE VIETNAM VENTURE. DETENTE WILL BE ENHANCED AND ROMANIA'S POSITION WILL NOT BE GREATLY AFFECTED BY EVENTS.

3. PUBLICLY, ROMANIAN MEDIA HAS GONE EASY ON THE U.S. SETBACK AND HAS MADE A DELIBERATE EFFORT NOT TO RUB IT IN (IT HAS ALSO BEEN CIRCUMSPECT REGARDING THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT - SEE REFTTEL). ONLY RARE MENTION OF "AMERICAN IMPERIALISM" HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN GOR STATEMENTS AND IN FAIRLY HEAVY MEDIA PLAY GIVEN TO THE NORTH-VIETNAM-PRG VICTORY. AT MAIN CELEBRATION MARKING OCCASION (NVN-PRG RECEPTION MAY 16) CEAUSESCU MADE NO MENTION OF U.S. AT ALL, EXCEPT TO ECHO NVN AMBASSADOR TO EFFECT "AMERICAN PEOPLE'S" SUPPORT CONTRIBUTED TO OUTCOME.

4. AMONG THE LIBERAL ROMANIAN INTELLECTUALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED -- AND OBVIOUSLY THEY TEND TO BE FRANKER THAN OFFICIALS -- PICTURE IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT. SOME PROFESS CONVICTION THAT WORLD BALANCE OF POWER HAS NOW SHIFTED SERIOUSLY AGAINST U.S. AND MOMENTUM IS NOW WITH RADICAL FORCES. THEY BUY DOMINO THEORY 100 PERCENT. SOME HAVE USED EPITHET "MUNICH" TO DESCRIBE SE ASIAN DENOUMENT, WHICH THEY DEPLORE MAINLY BECAUSE A U.S. INJURED ABROAD AND PARALYZED (AS THEY SEE IT) DOMESTICALLY BETWEEN WHITE HOUSE AND CONGRESS, UNABLE TO HONOR ALL COMMITMENTS (WHATEVER ORAL REASSURANCES ARE PURVEYED), WILL PROBABLY NOT BE WILLING OR ABLE COUNTER SOVIET INFLUENCE OVER ROMANIA AS EFFECTIVELY. SUBSIDENCE OF U.S. INFLUENCE IS SOMETHING THEY FEEL THE ROMANIANS LEADERSHIP MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, PROBABLY BY REDOUBLING EFFORTS AMONG NON-ALIGNED.

5. ALSO WORRISOME TO THOSE LIBERALS HERE WHO HAVE NOT LOST HOPE OF MAKING EE SOCIETIES MORE RATIONAL FROM WITHIN IS THAT COMMUNIST REGIMES SEEM TO BE PROVING MORE DURABLE AND CONSISTENT THAN THE GREAT DEMOCRACIES, THEREBY STRENGTHENING EE'S DOMESTIC DOGMATISTS. KNOWNOTHINGNESS IN CONGRESS AND THE PRESS THEY SCORN. WHILE U.S. IS GIVEN CREDIT FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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STILL POSSESSING ECONOMIC RESILIENCY AND MORAL RESERVES, THE LACK OF A CONVINCING STRATEGY AND CONCEPTUAL BASIS FOR POST-VIETNAM FOREIGN POLICY (AS THEY PERCEIVE THINGS) CANNOT SAFELY BE TOLERATED MUCH LONGER.

6. ALTHOUGH THE USSR IS SEEN GENERALLY AS HAVING GAINED STRENGTH OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS RELATIVE TO THE WEST, THIS IS LESS DUE TO U.S. TROUBLE IN SE ASIA THAN TO WESTERN LEADERSHIP

DRIFT AND ECONOMIC TROUBLES AND THE PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES SOVIET
RAW MATERIALS HAVE AFFORDED MOSCOW. FUTURE OF DETENTE IS NOT
NECESSARILY IMPERILED; EE IDEOLOGICAL (INTER-PARTY) SPHERE
IS ONE WHERE SOVIETS, IN FACT, HAVE NOT TRANSLATED POWER INTO
SUCCESSES.

7. IN BRIEF, WE SENSE THAT SE ASIAN COLLAPSE IS PERCEIVED HERE AS
SERIOUS BUT HARDLY MORTAL BLOW TO U.S. PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE,
THAT POSITIVE OPTIONS ACCRUE AS WELL AS WOUNDS, AND
THAT U.S. STRENGTH IS INTACT BUT FURTHER CONCEPTUAL DRIFT AND
LACK OF UNITY IN U.S. "RULING CIRCLES" COULD BRING MORE
EROSION, WHICH WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE HEALTHY FOR ROMANIA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, FOREIGN RELATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUCHAR02167
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750175-0920
From: BUCHAREST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750537/aaaabgyd.tel
Line Count: 128
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BUCHAREST 2121
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <24 SEP 2003 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROMANIAN PERCEPTION OF U.S. CATASTROPHE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
TAGS: PFOR, US, RO, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006